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[For information on the establishment of schools and medical clinics in Libya by the Italian government for the benefit of the Bedouins, see Categories 175 and 648.]

162 true numbers. As recipients of aid programs, their rations
114 are based upon the number of members per family. For these
•[657] purposes, they are anxious to present as high a population figure as possible. They exaggerate their livestock count in order to receive more fodder, and, at other times, underestimate their numbers to escape taxes.

162 For purposes of this study, the Bedouin population of
161 al-Qasr is about 1,500 to 3,000. Most of this population lives
361 on the coastal area and in the cultivable wadi areas. The remainder is scattered south of the plateau region, near the
621 desert proper. The 'izba sector of al-Qasr may be described
*613 as a nucleated cluster or settlement, but due to the nature of the Bedouin segmentary lineage system, with its relatively autonomous kin-based residence groups, this sector lacks the usual degree of social interaction and integration associated
621 with the village or hamlet. The 'izba might be described as a
*613 multi-nucleated settlement or cluster. Each lineage has its
423 own mintaqa. Each mintaqa usually has a small dry-goods store
631 owned and operated by a lineage member and catering chiefly
443 to his own lineage-mates. Water and land in the 'izba sector
423 are individually owned. In the barley-pasture area, rights
*613 and privileges of ownership are vested in the corporate group,
621 even though the Bedouins and the government claim that tribally
423 owned land is illegal. All land boundaries, whether a mintaqa or an individual's plot, are well-marked and well-known. The

423 boundary marker is usually a pile of stones, a tree, a wadi, or, a line recorded on paper by two parties and given to a third to hold in case of future differences of opinion.

342 361 [656] In the extreme southern pastoral zone, there were few permanent houses but with new government land registration laws the number is increasing. The settlement pattern in this area might be characterized as a scattered homestead type, "homesteads" being defined as tents or houses whose location is permanent. Tents are seldom, if ever, moved these days even during a heavy rainy season. This is because barley production [557] has increased, and, mainly because government aid programs supply fodder for the sheep. Bedouin shepherds in the pasture area change dwelling places, but only to move their tents from their winter protective hiding places out into the open for the springtime, or to move from their tent into the stone house for the cold, rainy winter. In either case, no real change in location is involved.

342 The tent is called bait al-'Arab ("house of the Arabs"). There are two types: the bait al-saif ("summer house"), and the bait al-rabi'a ("spring house"). The summer tent, made of "gunny" and flour sacks sewn together, is for protection from the sun. The spring tent is the real Bedouin tent. It is [286] woven from the wool of the sheep and camel hair, and is used [237] during the winter. Most Bedouin now say that they cannot afford [435] the 125 Egyptian pounds (1 pound = $2.80) which the bait al-rabi'a costs to make or buy.

342 costs to make or buy. In the 'izba sector, most of the Bedouin have a summer tent which they place next to their stone house for the hot months. According to the governmental community [657] development program, in order to own land and register it properly one must build at least one room upon it. The one- [935] room house (daar) is not common in al-Qasr: it is a symbol of poverty. The multi-roomed house (duwaar) is common. It is [333] [316] built of large pieces of cut sandstone which are quarried in al-Qasr. Those who can afford it build the duwaar and surround 342 556 it with a wall in compound fashion. Only one man in al-Qasr is rich enough to afford two of these compound-type houses. The size and style of a house reflect status. Traditionally, [184] a man furnished a tent for each wife and for each married son. Although this is still the custom in parts of the desert, in al-Qasr the private room (daar) in a duwaar has replaced the private tent.

596 The basic residential unit is called naja' (literally, "hamlet"). It is composed of the father, his wife (wives), his unmarried children, and married sons and their families. The naja' takes the name of the father who is called the shaib ("elder," literally, "white-haired one") of the group. In the naja', the word of the shaib is law, and the members' chief duty is unquestionable obedience. The average naja' in al-Qasr consists of about three or four houses or tents.

361 1925 and 1930 because, as they point out, the British
648 administration provided employment for "the poor Bedouin."
361 The wealthier Bedouins who owned camels and large numbers of
556 sheep remained in the desert. Just the reverse is happening
178 at the present time. The rich men who see the advantages in business, and the comforts which Matruh offers, can also afford the change of residence or the maintenance of two residences.

175 In 1922, the Egyptian government first registered land
423 in al-Qasr. At this time, they sanctioned the tribal division
•657 of territory which existed. There was no attempt to force political integration upon the Bedouins. Egypt has never had a nomad problem as have other Middle Eastern countries. The history of Egypt is essentially the history of the Nile Valley. Consequently, it is not odd that we find no mention of the Awlad 'Ali in the historical record. The Bedouins of the Western Desert were resigned to their place in the desert, and the central government saw no particular advantage or disadvantage in this.

423 Concern for the Bedouin minority in Egypt emerged only
648 with nationalistic programs of modernization. In 1954, the Fourth United Nations Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States in the Middle East convened in Baghdad. From this meeting came some general recommendations for dealing with the problems of the Bedouin. The major proposal was calculated to transform

1: Obermeyer E-5 (1964-1965) 1969 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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423 the structure of both the nomadic and the sedentary tribe:
648 "Settlement should take place on the basis of granting each individual capable of working in agriculture a piece of land, the area to be fixed by the state, calculated to ensure the raising of his living standard and to enable him to support himself and his legal dependents on condition that he start cultivation of the land. When distributing the land, care should be taken that a family be settled on a single piece of land composed of the total of the plots granted to its members, the family being composed of relatives to the first grandfather" (Abu-Zeid n.d.).

From this point, each Arab country dealt with the problem of the nomad in its own way, some effectively and others not so effectively. Not until 1958 did Egypt make a formal
423 • 657 effort to integrate the Bedouins of the Western Desert into
656 the national society. And it was not until 1960 that the so-called "Desert Law" of 1958 (U.A.R. Law Number 124) was activated and enforced. The most important provision of this law followed the plan formulated at the Baghdad conference: "There is no recognition of tribal possession of land which is considered as belonging to the State, and whenever a family develops and plants on a holding, this gives it the right, if approved, to the issue of a title to it by the government." Law Number 124 also provided that land occupied by buildings or orchards before 1957 can be owned by the occupants at a low

423 cost payable over a period of thirty years. As pointed out
•657 by Professor Abu-Zeid (n.d.), this law is welcomed in part
656 because the garden area to which it really applies (the garden area in al-Qasr would be the 'izba sector) is not considered "tribal territory" or lineage-owned as are the barley and pasture regions.

653 Governmental activity growing out of the "Desert Law"
177 has been an important catalyst for social, economic and
*613 political change. All of these aspects of change had repurcussions on the lineage system and the authority structure of the Bedouins. In 1959, the government entered al-Qasr with the goal of revitalizing and reorganizing the hydraulic system of the area. The revival of the Roman water system, especially the network of cisterns covering the southern region of al-Qasr, and, on the coast, the restoration of the well system and underground galleries, the drilling of new wells and the intensification of olive farming have all led to a levelling of economic differentiation between lineages and between individuals.

657 In 1956, the Egyptian government passed the Cooperative
177 Law (U.A.R. Law Number 217) establishing agricultural cooperative
474 societies throughout the country. But not until 1959 did this law have any impact on the tribes of the Western Desert.
[433] Generally, the cooperative society has served as a primary and successful agent of social change in the desert. It has

657 sanctioned the direction of economic development from a
177 pastoral to a market-oriented, agricultural mode of production.
474 Land reclamation and development projects administered by the
433 cooperatives encourage the Bedouins to produce cash crops.
In this way, Al-Qasr is being drawn into the national economy.
Price changes and seasonal commodity preferences in the Nile
Valley now affect the economy of al-Qasr. The generation of a
[181] cash economy has created a competitive spirit and a degree of
individual independence which cuts across tribal loyalty and
affiliations. The cooperative society, in this manner, tends
to be a "social equalizer."

657 But economic transformation as the intended goal of the
177 Cooperative Law is far from being an accomplished fact. Al-
178 Qasr is still a traditional Bedouin society in the sense that
474 the lineage structure is the framework in which economic and
*613 social relations take place. Because the cooperative society,
as a new basis for association, threatens the dominance of the
lineage principle, it has become the focal point for a struggle
between the old and new.

657 The major problem encountered by the government officials
177 in this program is that the cooperative society, as a central
474 agent for the dispensation of aid products, becomes a pawn in
661 tribal power politics. The government, forced to rely upon the
435 prestigious and wealthy men for the initiation of an innovative
program, found itself unable to prevent profiteering and the

657 sale of goods on the black-market. Tribal leaders, or members
179 of a "status group," in whose hands the operation of the
474 cooperative society had been placed, confiscated more than
661 their share of food and fodder and resold it either in the
[435] Nile Valley or to their own tribesmen for whom it had originally been intended. The government could not really prosecute the guilty parties for fear of jeopardizing the entire program. Nor could they convince the cheated tribesmen that they had been treated unfairly by their leaders. For one thing, the
[673] Bedouins did not consider that their leaders were committing a wrong; furthermore, any Bedouin who would go to the govern-ment to inform on another Bedouin would be subjected to a
[579] trial by Bedouin justice. It is still the traditional codes of Bedouin law and honor, and not the modern judiciary system, which prevail in al-Qasr.

474 The cooperative society in al-Qasr is one of thirteen in the general area of Marsa Matruh. It began with a member-ship of twenty-five, twenty-two of these were from the 'Aishaibat tribe. Today, the enrollment is 139 official, and another 195 "unofficial" members. The unofficial members represent un-registered branches of the al-Qasr cooperative. The Bedouins
[735] explain that they cannot allow any members of the tribe to go hungry, and, therefore, they will distribute food to all those
[661] who need it (Zein, n.d.). This, of course, shows that those cooperative officers who do profiteer are not entirely oblivious

654 1960, were olive tree owners. One individual, who owned 400
245 trees before the reclamation program, now owns 1,400 trees.
179 His increase has not all been at government expense, but a large share of it has been. Of the 9,514 trees planted by the government, 4,666 of them have been planted in the barley and wadi area to the south; 4,848 in the garden area on the coast. In the southern sector, a Bedouin who owns at
[312] least ten acres of land may have the government drill a well and erect a windmill pump on his property. For this, he pays
[452] 350 Egyptian pounds (approximately $1,000.00) over a thirty-year period. The Bedouin is willing to undertake this contract, and also to take land out of barley production, because he sees the future security of the olive market. Because of this, also, he is willing to agree on land boundaries and to register his land with the government.

• 657 Economic transition would not be possible, nor could the Bedouins afford to hazard it, were it not for government welfare payments in the form of staple products. These rations stabilize the mixed economy of the al-Qasr while promoting a shift to a fuller dependence on agriculture. Of the thirteen
657 cooperative societies in the Matruh area, al-Qasr is the
474 largest and has been designated as a pilot project for the whole Western Desert. Al-Qasr garners the largest share of government aid, and, consequently, is heavily dependent upon it. The table below shows the amount of aid given monthly to

1: Obermeyer E-5 (1964-1965) 1969 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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TABLE 2

AID PER MONTH TO THIRTEEN COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES OF MATRUH AREA, 1963

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	No. of Families	Beef	Fish	Oil	Cheese	Tea	Powdered Milk
al-Qasr Aid:	308 (1344)*	1008	604	604	1209	201	1209
Total Aid:	627 (3134)*	2350	1410	1410	2826	470	2820

*Number of Persons

al-Qasr during the year 1963. This amount is compared with the total amount of aid given to all thirteen cooperatives in the area.

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During this period, 1960 to 1964, the government has succeeded in stabilizing the pastoral sector of the economy. The Bedouins are given barley and cottonseed-oil cakes as fodder for their animals. Consequently, they must depend upon their own barley crop only to a minimal degree. There are 144,804 sheep in the Marsa Matruh area, as of 1963. In al-Qasr, 332 men own 9,958 sheep, about 30 sheep per man. One sheep requires a kilogram of barley and six kilograms of cottonseed cake per month. The table below shows the amount of fodder distributed to al-Qasr and the whole Matruh sector, in 1963, through the cooperative societies.

[474]

407 the lack of spare parts. Three of the tractors were Russian-built, and two were Egyptian made. The Bedouins say that the Russian tractors are the better.

407 241 654 [132] In 1964, the Western Desert received its heaviest rainfall since 1947. To take advantage of this, local government officials of the reclamation project requested an additional fifty tractors for plowing on the coastal zone. They received only six additional tractors. In that year, the thirty-nine tractors used in the entire Western Desert were able to plow 15,240 acres of land. During this period of economic change, 731 233 [654] a bad barley crop causes a fodder shortage for the animals, and seldom is the aid program able to compensate for this. [166] Consequently, there is a need to ship sheep to the Nile Valley, or to seek permission to take them to the pastures of Cyrenaica. Both situations create tremendous difficulties for both the Bedouins and the government. A third alternative for the [432] [435] Bedouin is to buy barley on the black-market. In doing this, he must pay six times the normal cost of grain, and risk reprisals.

177 ●657 Prior to 1960, change in al-Qasr might be characterized as a steady and endogenous process of sedentarization. It had been taking place for about a century and a half. Exogenous change, social and economic, may be identified with the desire of the government to reclaim land in al-Qasr for agricultural use, and to integrate the Bedouin into the national economy.

177 This program cannot be divorced from the fundamental political
• 657 aim of the government which is to make the Bedouins politically-conscious participants in the Egyptian political community. The reform program, which has been only outlined here, has had ramifying effects on the Bedouin traditional systems, especially the political, and that is a major concern of this study. Changes in one structure of society are apt to have repercussions in other structures. This seems particularly the case where the economic and political structures are concerned. Economic change has been a background to political structural change in al-Qasr. Political change is historical in al-Qasr, but it has been accelerated in the period starting with 1960. For these reasons, we are interested in both the traditional and the modern systems.

177 Change will continue to occur in al-Qasr. This is
433 because the advantages of cash crops and a market economy
434 are obvious to the Bedouin. He can even have more of what has been traditionally valued if he is successful in the modern market system. He can buy a sheep for 10 L.E.; a goat for
[435] 8 L.E.; a horse for 90 L.E.; a camel for 150 L.E.; and a fine spring tent for 125 L.E.. A Bedouin knows that he must, as an individual, register his land, build a stone house on it (which costs about 100 L.E.), and learn the technique of irrigation farming. All of the Bedouins of al-Qasr are to some degree willing to do this for the ma'isha simha which it

"modern industrial society," it was not easy work. This, despite the fact that there was no language barrier, seeing that I spoke the same language of the group, or rather they spoke my native language; I had no problems of introduction because I had worked in the area and become acquainted with a number of the tribal members in 1958. When I went to the field, I then sought out these old friends who introduced me to other members of the group.

At the beginning, I made a deliberate effort to avoid associating with the government officials who worked in the area, even though they were quite willing to help and seemed to have an intimate knowledge of the people in the area. I had thought that any identification with the government would put me in a suspicious situation as far as the tribal groups were concerned, and thus prevent me from having good rapport with them. Later, however, I realized that the relationship between the government officials in the area and the tribal population was extremely good, and they always looked to the government as a source of aid and support to them. There was no conflict of interest between the state administration and the tribal groups. In fact, people accepted me more readily whenever they knew that I had worked for the Egyptian government. This later developed into a time-consuming and disappointing experience when many of the tribal members came to me asking for help getting employment in the government projects in the area, or to have their sons accepted in certain government schools, or to get some favored treatment from the government relief organizations.

The difficulty I encountered in my field work stemmed from the interplay of three major factors: the reliance on the case study method which necessitates the intimate knowledge of the events, facts, and parties involved in each case; being a female anthropologist in a society where women by definition are barred from public participation and particularly

439 [315] market with more than one-third of its lamb meat. The other two-thirds of the lamb market was supplied from the Sudan, the Delta, and [315] [178] [464] from Libya. Oil industry in Libya attracted a large number of the young tribal members in Libya, who had originally undertaken the main task of sheep pastoralism. As a result, the population of shcep and goats in Libya dropped sharply. Not only did the Libyan market become unable to supply the Egyptian market, but it was also unable to support itself and was forced to pay high prices for the Western Desert sheep and goats. [457] The price became even more attractive after the devaluation of the Egyptian pound which gave higher value to the Libyan currency, and hence, the price of sheep. In the last decade, the number of smuggled sheep reached a point where it created a great shortage of lamb meat in Egypt. All government attempts to stop smuggling activities in either direction have failed.

● 657 All these factors attracted the attention of the government to the area and its people. The need to control the tribal population became evident. But since it is difficult, if not impossible, to control a population which is constantly on the move, the first step the government took to control the tribal population was to settle them in permanent villages. A number of projects are underway. The aims of these [654] [137] projects are to increase the cultivated land and to improve the pastures by introducing new and highly nutritive pasture plants in areas where agriculture is not feasible. Attempts have also been made to promote local crafts and industries. The intentional efforts of the government [178] [464] to settle the tribal population is supplemented by the gradual drift of many tribesmen, especially the younger generation, to seek part-time or

full-time employment with the government projects in the area and settle in fairly permanent houses near the place of work.

With the movement toward settling down, the relative legal and political autonomy which Awlad Ali once enjoyed is breaking down. This was reflected first in the loss of military exemption. In 1947, the draft law was applied to all tribal populations in Egypt, including Awlad Ali. The application is not seriously enforced, however, due to the fact that births are still not recorded in the area. In 1954, the "omda" or mayorship system practiced in the rural areas of Egypt was extended to the Western Desert with certain modifications to fit the tribal organization of populations in the area. This put a strain on the native system of leadership, a point which will be covered in later chapters. Finally, and along with the extension of the omda system, the jurisdiction of the legal system of the state was extended over the area. This resulted in a duality in the judicial process. The tribal law, with its traditional tribal mediators, is still functioning side by side with the modern court system of the state law. In many cases, especially in criminal cases, the individual is tried under both systems, and sometimes receives two different judgments for the same offense. Various efforts are being made to minimize the effects of this duality. In civil cases, the problem does not seem serious, since it is the parties themselves, or one of them, who voluntarily bring the case to the attention of the legal authorities. Therefore, they can choose between the traditional legal system and the modern courts of law. So far, civil cases are brought to the modern court system only when the native procedures fail to achieve a settlement. As such, the

modern court system may be viewed as a form of appeal to the tribal justice. One has to be careful, however, in calling such a procedure an appeal, since the tribal proceedings have no relevance in the court proceedings.

The duality is more serious in criminal cases. When an act is defined as illegal by both the tribal and modern law, persons committing it come automatically under the jurisdiction of both laws. As long as such acts remain unknown to the police, the duality of procedures is not undertaken. This is possible in minor cases of assault or theft or adultery. But in major cases, such as homocide or serious assault resulting in the serious injury of a tribal member, it is difficult to keep the news a secret from the authorities. The funeral proceedings in the former cases and the medical attention needed in the latter cases are hard to conceal. Besides, serious cases start a whole series of mediations and go-betweens which always become the general knowledge in the entire area and the subject of conversation among the people. When the authorities know about such cases, they have to take immediate action to bring the offender to trial, even when the government authorities know that the tribal proceedings are being conducted in the case. Some attempts are made by both the tribal law and the modern law to minimize the effect of that duality. It is common that when the district attorney knows that a certain criminal case has been successfully solved according to the tribal proceedings, to ask for the minimum penalty for the offense. On the side of the tribal proceedings, once the case has been solved, the witnesses needed to testify for the prosecutor are instructed by their fellow tribesmen to refrain from giving the information

554 The most powerful
179 and numerous segments are then represented by the omda, and the lesser
634 ones are represented by a sheikh. Unlike the system in the rural areas
619 where the sheikh is a subordinate to the omda, the sheikh in the Western
622 Desert does not occupy the same position. Instead he has the same functions and occupies, with regard to his tribal segment, the same position the omda occupies with regard to his. He does not take orders from the omda and has direct relations with the administration. Sheikhs and omdas from one district are supposed to meet periodically in the police station and discuss with the police officer in charge of the station matters concerning the district and their own tribal groups. The only difference between the omda and the sheikh in the Western Desert seems to be the label of the office. The label itself carries a certain amount of prestige to the tribal segment represented by the omda, since it is an acknowledgement by the government of its importance. This is why many of the tribal segments try to be represented by an omda rather than by a sheikh. In certain districts where two or more strong tribal segments compete for the honor of being represented by an omda, the district may have two or more omdas representing the strong tribal segments and a number of sheikhs representing the lesser tribal groups in the district. Not every tribal segment in a district is represented by an omda or even a sheikh, however. Very small tribal segments may join together and have one sheikh, while others may agree to be represented by one of the larger segment's sheikh or omda.

634 Obviously, the number of omdas and sheikhs differ from one district
554 to another depending on the number of important tribal segments in each.
619 There is no specific rule whereby a certain tribal segment is considered
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634 554 619 657 by the government to be significant enough to be represented. This matter is left almost entirely to the ability of members of a given tribal segment to convince the authorities that their group is sizable enough to give them the right of omda, or at least sheikh's representation. A segment represented by a sheikh may later ask for an omda because of the prestige involved. It is worth noting in this respect that the various tribal segments in the area are eager to be represented in the government administrative structure. Gaining prestige among the other tribal segments is only one motive for such eagerness. Unlike the omda in the [622] rural areas who functions mainly as a representative of the government to the village, the omda or sheikh in the Western Desert is a representative of the people to the government. This is not a theoretical difference but involves a real difference in the relation of the government and the omda, on the one hand, and between the latter and the people his represnets, on the other. The omda in the village is a symbol of 622 554 657 authority to his people. He is the undisputed ruler of the village. His authority is backed by his ability to mobilize and use the force put at his diposal by the government, in the implementation of his decisions. Since he is appointed by the government and not elected by the people, he does not have to rely on his popularity to hold or maintain office. His main concern is to please the government, rather than the people of the village to whom he is merely a symbol of authority. There is very little that the village omda can bring to his people form the outside, while he has to implement government policies, collect taxation, apprehend criminals, all tasks which the villagers are not eager to have done.

634 666 659 554 619 635 The situation is quite different in the Western Desert. Although it is the government, represented by the province council, which makes the final decision in appointing the omda or sheikh, yet this appointment is made on the basis of nominations given by the gribal segment or segments which he would represent. Since the tribal segment usually nominates one person, the decision of the council is limited to the examination of the credentials of the nominee and to see if he meets the basic requirements of the law. If a certain nominee is rejected by the council, a very rare occurrence, the matter goes back to the tribal segment to make another nomination. In practice, then, the omda of the Western Desert is elected by the people and the appointment by the government of the omda is significant only in cases where the omda is to represent more than one small tribal segment and each nominates one. Here the council has to choose between the various nominaees and appoints the best qualified. Unlike the omda of the village, the tribal omda is a real representative of his people. Despite the fact that he becomes part of a governmental structure, his basic function is to look after the interest of his tribal group. Or, as one informant put it, "The omda is the servant of the people." In many cases the best interest of the tribal segment is served through full cooperation of the omda with the government. So far there seems to be very little conflict between the interest of the tribal populations and that of the government. There is very little in the area that the government demands or needs. There is no taxable land to speak of. There are only a few acres of barley land and even these are minimally taxed. The main responsibility of the omda to the government is to report births and deaths and give a yearly list of young men

634 554 657 619 [622] 634 554 657 [651]

634 554 659 who reach the age of military service. He is also supposed to report the presence of any fugitive or crininal in his district and report crimes accurring in that district and which involve members of the tribal segment he represents.

634 554 657 562 701 178 The first two duties of the omda to the government do not involve any conflict of interest. Unlike the rural areas where sons are considered a very important economic asset to their parents, and therefore, there is a general resentment of military service which takes the sons away and deprives the parents of their important work around the fields, Awlad Ali look at military service as

1 On the basis of one percent of the yearly yield.

an opportunity to have their sons go to the city, obtain guaranteed payment, and escape the hardship of nomadic existence. Economic activities [233] in the area do not require the cooperation of a large number of individuals, and most of the grazing of animals is done either by a paid shepherd or by one of the grown-up sons. Although there still exists an [183] ideology which values having many sons, yet with the cessation of hostilities between the tribal segments, their presence in the area has lost its [464] value. Many of the younger generation are seeking jobs with the government projects in the area or in the city. Neither one is easy to find. Joining the army is increasingly considered as an easy alternative.

634 554 657 674 The omda's function which seems to involve some conflicting loyalties is that of reporting crimes involving members of his tribal segment. But even this does not pose a serious problem as it might seem. Almost all minor crimes committed against property or persons as well as all civil disputes are left to be handled by the tribal proceedings. The duties of the omda are limited to reporting the cases of murder and serious assault

634 which result in permanent bodily harm. Reporting such cases is a fairly
554 minor proceeding since such cases come to the knowledge of the authori-
657 ties through other channels, mainly from talks involved in the mediation
674 for the bloodmoney or from the hospital to which serious assault cases
[743] are usually taken. Besides, reporting a crime does not mean convicting the offender. This latter depends on evidence which, in case the dispute has been settled by tribal proceedings, is hard for the police authorities to find.

634 While the government demands do not impose serious conflicts of
554 loyalty on the part of the omda, if successful, his position with the
657 government can bring to his tribal segments great benefits. These benefits are usually in the form of various social and economic aids including fodder for the animals and food and clothing for the people during the dry years. Other benefits including providing the tribal population with olive trees and helping them clear many of the old Roman wells and establishing wind mills for nominal fees. Not everyone in the area can have such benefits. Some do not even know they exist. A successful omda could manipulate the administration to get as many benefits for
[871] his tribal segment as poesible.. Some successful omdas were able to have
[474] the government build schools in their districts, establish cooperative units to market local products such as wool, sheep, and olive oil.

634 This should not lead us, however, to conclude that the position of
554 the omda in the Western Desert does not involve any kind of conflicting
657 loyalty or that he is always supported by his people or even trusted by
578 them. One informant said that the omda of his biat is "...government man, not ours....He would sell us all if this pleases his masters in the

634 government." But due to the nature of the representation and the spe-
554 cific relation of the government to the area, the position of the omda
650 does not pose serious demands upon the loyalty of the omda to his tribal
578 group.

634 Because of the omda's ability to bring benefits to his tribal seg-
554 ment from the government, the ability to manipulate the administrative
657 officials is the most important basis for the nomination of a given
666 individual for the position of the omda. "The omda is one who can speak city talk and knows how to deal with the government officials." Age is not important; young people know more about city ways than old people. "A man may be a cheat, but as long as he can get our things done, he is the best man for the job...of course, we don't want to nominate someone with a bad reputation who may blacken our face in front of everybody. However, if he has a bad reputation the council would not approve his appointment...he just has to be someone who can get things done..."

159 Muftah Mughaieb, the sheikh of the Sanagrah tribal segment in the
634 district of Haman, described the circumstances of his nomination as
554 follows:
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666 Before the former sheikh of that tribal segment died (he
598 was Muftah's uncle), one member of the group got into an argu-
625 ment with the police officer in charge of the police station in the district. The tribesman insulted the police officer who insisted on arresting him. Rumors also had it that the police officer was using his authority to reduce the share of the tribal segment in the government aid which was badly needed during that particular year. Sheikh Muftah, whose father is the Aqila of

159 bait Mughaieb of the Sanagrah tribe, went to the officer and apol-
634 ogized to him on behalf of the whole group and invited him to a
554 lavish dinner party. The charges against the tribesman were soon
657 dropped, and it was concluded that it was because of the way Muftah
666 had handled the situation. Since that incident, Muftah has been
[578] known as an expert in handling the government officials. One year
[625] later, the sheikh of the tribal segment died, and a meeting was held during which the important members of the Sanagrah tribal segment in the district decided to nominate Muftah for the position of the sheikh, vacant by the death of his uncle. Muftah, who was attending the meeting, was asked to accept the nomination, and he agreed. "...I accepted the nomination reluctantly." Muftah later told me, "I did not really want to become the sheikh. The
159 position does not bring any personal benefit, and it involves a
634 lot of responsibility. The sheikh has to act as an attorney for
554 his tribe, represent it to the government and competes with other
657 sheikhs to bring his people things that the other sheikhs cannot get for theirs, like more membership in the cooperative units or in the socialist union. And what does he get in return? Nothing... not even the gratitude of his people. To them, he is a servant of the tribe, and his duty is to look after its interest. If he doesn't, then everybody is quick to criticize him. I had to accept the nomination because I felt it was my duty to do so and not to embarrass the awaqil and the important people of the tribe who
[465] put their confidence in me. As far as the government, all I get is six pounds a month."

634 554 619 "The omda or sheikh is both a blessing and a curse to his tribe," said one member of the Aggary 'eila. "He can bring benefits to his tribe, but at the same time, he has to report his own people if one of them breaks the city laws.... His position is like that of a double-edged razor."

Most of the people in the area, however, tolerate the negative aspects of the omda's functions as a moderate price for the possible benefits they may get through his position. This is why each tribal segment does its best to be represented by an omda, or at least by a sheikh.

Within his tribal segment he enjoys a great deal of respect. He does not, by means of position alone, command any power over members of his group similar to the power the omda of the village has over his people. It seems, however, that although the position itself does not [613] carry with it any power, yet, when the holder of that position is at the same time a native tribal leader or aqila, it tends to enhance his position as a tribal leader and to give him more respect among members of his tribal unit as well as among the rest of the tribal groupings. 634 554 619 182 657 613 This may be explained by the fact that the establishment of the omda system in that area did not involve direct interference with the native political system except in a minimal way, mainly to keep the tribal populations in the area from interfering in the progress of various government projects in the area. As such, the system did not impose too many demands upon the tribal loyalties of the omdas or sheikhs. In the relationship between the government and the tribal population, the balance so far has been in favor of the latter, who, by means of

634 omda representation, are taking from the government much more than
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619 they are giving in return. Being the link between his people and
182 the government in such a system gives the aqila a new basis of
657 political support.
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THE SEDENTARIZATION OF NOMADS IN THE WESTERN DESERT OF EGYPT

A. M. Abou-Zeid

178 Much attention has been paid in the last few years, in both Egyptian and
• 657 international circles, to the question of settling the nomads of the Western Desert of Egypt. A number of institutions (e.g. the Cairo Institute for Desert Research and the Departments of Sociology and Social Anthropology in the Egyptian universities) and some government departments (e.g. the Department of Desert Irrigation, of the Ministry of Public Works) have combined their efforts to study the economic and social situation of the semi-nomadic clans and the possibility of creating new sedentary agricultural communities to replace the present nomadic and semi-nomadic groups whose economy is based on the rearing of livestock in general, and of sheep in particular. It is the purpose of this paper to give a brief account of the main projects of sedentarization suggested by the authorities concerned in Egypt, and to outline their expected effects upon the economic system and modes of living, and also to indicate the repercussions they may eventually have on the whole social structure of the semi-nomadic clans. Apart from the planned projects, there
178 is a marked and growing tendency among these people, especially the younger generation, to abandon the traditional way of life and to settle down. This
166 tendency is generally stimulated by the changing social conditions. The tremendous hardships and the insecurity of the nomadic life, which is entirely dependent on rains, and the increasing social and cultural contacts with the urban communities in the Delta are the main factors influencing this change of social conditions, thus accentuating what may be described as a spontaneous and natural drift to settled life. Thus, an acute decline in the amount of rainfall, which is a frequent phenomenon in the Western Desert, and the consequent drought, famine and death of large numbers of animals will drive men to search for a more stable means of living in which they can find the security that is lacking in the nomadic way of life. The introduction of modern education and the establishment of schools in the larger villages have played a great role in changing the outlook of the people and in discrediting the traditional nomadic values. The advent of the railway and the improvement of other means of transport and communication have encouraged contacts with the Delta, and more particularly with Alexandria. As a result, an increasing number of young men migrate every year to Alexandria and get themselves paid jobs there. Trade and commercial transactions have also been increased with the Delta. New trade centres (e.g. El-Hammam, El-Dab'aa and Mersa Matrouh) have grown up along the railway line at the key stations. The most important of these centres is perhaps El-Hammam, which is the largest cattle market in the Western Desert. Small food stores and cafés and restaurants owned by 'native' people have been opened at these centres and in the larger

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bad years the returns may be so poor that grain and flour have to be sent from the Delta to avert famine. The failure of the crop may also compel whole clan-segments to migrate with their animals to the Delta. In this respect, the semi-nomadic clans of the Western Desert represent a real burden on the national economy of Egypt. 105 243 311

Livestock husbandry, which is by far the most important and highly valued occupation, is itself subject to the variability and the erratic nature of rainfall, since it is the rain which determines the abundance of herbage and, consequently, the number of animals reared. Pasture land is found mainly to the south of the cultivated land. Sometimes, the fallow patches among the barley fields are also covered with grass and other pasture plants suitable for grazing. Pasture plants usually persist between December and May; during the summer, the land becomes arid hard desert with only few dispersed patches of dry grass. The grazing season *par excellence* is from November to April, during which period barley stands in the fields. After the first showers of November, barley is sown and the young men soon move with their flocks to the pastures, leaving the older people to look after the fields. As the dry season advances, the flocks are moved northwards to the cultivated lands so as to be nearer to fodder and to water-holes. Thus, the movements of the herders are rhythmic and regulated by the division of the year into two major seasons: the wet season and the dry season. The wet season is the period of plenty during which the animals are well fed; the dry season is the period of starvation for the flocks which must then rely on such fodder as barley straw and on the drying grass. Any movements of animals that may take place during that season are carried out on a very limited scale. In exceptionally bad years the people are compelled to dispose of their animals, or at least of a large part of the flocks, or they may send them away to their friends and relatives who may be living near vegetation. Sometimes, the herdsmen find themselves compelled to cross the frontiers to Cyrenaica for pasture. 105 231

We can see then from this brief account to what extent the water situation is responsible for determining the modes of living in the desert and for channelling human activities and imposing certain limitations on these activities. Development projects and sedentarization schemes planned for the Western Desert and its inhabitants must, therefore, give a great deal of importance to the question of water and its availability. In fact, most of the contemplated projects envisage the possibility of better exploitation of the existing water supplies as well as the tapping of potential resources. 105

Rightly or wrongly, it is generally assumed in Egypt that nomadism and semi-nomadism represent a phase of deterioration which is no longer compatible with the actualities of modern life and therefore should be abolished. For, apart from the fact that it is responsible for the hardships and insecurity suffered by the desert dwellers and the consequent ill effects on the national economy, especially in bad years, nomadism as practised in the Western Desert and under the prevailing circumstances is wasteful and destructive. Vast stretches of land which could be reclaimed at little cost and cultivated intensively are simply left for grazing without any serious endeavour to make better use of them. Under the contemplated sedentarization projects it is intended to increase the cultivated area, to improve the pastures by introducing new pasture plants of higher nutritive value in areas where agriculture is not 178 312 657

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178 practicable, to tap unused resources, to develop the existing primitive crafts and to establish new industries. The question of water is the corner-stone of 312 all these projects. Subterranean water has been tapped from the ancient Roman • 657 wells, and about 120 artesian wells have been sunk lately along the coast. A number of water cisterns have been constructed, and others are under construction, to preserve the rain-water for irrigation. Special attention has been paid in this regard to the western part of the coastal zone where the amount of rainfall exceeds that falling in the eastern parts. An example is the Wadi-el-Kharrouba cistern near Mersa Matrouh which will prevent large amounts of rain-water from being lost in the sands or in the sea, and store it for use during the dry season. All the water thus obtained will certainly help to extend the area sown with barley, especially in the El-Dab'aa zone; besides providing the more settled people with what they require to keep their fig trees and olive groves. The abundance of water may also encourage the introduction of new plants and trees which need a more stable and constant supply of water.

178 A few examples may serve to illustrate further the general policy adopted 657 with regard to the problem of sedentarization of the Bedouin clans, and the steps taken to put the policy into effect.

The first example we shall consider is the Wadi-el-Natrun project which concerns the exploitation of the natural resources of the area so as to allow the establishement of new industries and the extension of the cultivated area, which in turn may eventually encourage the people to change to agriculture or industry, i.e. to a sedentary life. The *wadi* is an extended depression which lies some 22 metres below sea-level. The south-eastern end of the depression is 80 kilometres from Cairo, while the northern end is about 85 kilometres from Alexandria. A number of shallow salt lakes cover about half its total area, and some of these lakes become dry during the summer. The *wadi* is known as a rich source of salt and natron (sodium carbonate). Also a certain reed called *halfa* grows there and is used by the inhabitants of the area for the making of rough mats. The depression has always been regarded as a grazing ground for sheep and goats, so that only 25 *feddans*[1] were cultivated in 1952. According to the project, the extraction of salt and soda was put under government supervision. Subterranean water was tapped in a number of places and by the end of 1957 more than one thousand *feddans* were brought under the plough. Serious efforts were also made to introduce the cultivation of fruit, olives and dates as well as vegetables. Much attention was also given to the question of improving the production of animals by introducing different methods of breeding, and encouraging the inhabitants of the area to change over to the improved breeds which are superior to the local animals. This was met at first with much reluctance and resistance, but there are signs that the people are beginning to appreciate the benefit of owning the improved breeds. A factory for the manufacture of carpets and rugs has also been established by the government. A considerable proportion of the raw wool required for the industry is obtained from local sources, and the relatively small production finds a ready market in the larger cities of the Delta. The point of particular interest for us here is that all the unskilled labour employed in this industry as well as in the extraction of salt and sodium is recruited from the local population. Those workers have become accustomed to a settled life, so that when the season of extraction is over and work is temporarily suspended they do

1. A *feddan* = 1 038 acres.

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not take up herding animals but rather prefer to engage in agriculture, either as paid workers at the government research farm where fruit and vegetables are grown, or cultivating small patches of barley for their own consumption. Paid jobs in the factory or in the extraction industry and on the farm are very attractive to the young men. Fruit and vegetables are grown, for research purposes, in a large area of the reclaimed land. It is understood, however, that this land will be sold to the people to be exploited by them; and it is hoped that development of such farms will lead to the introduction of a canned food industry. Thus, the ultimate aim of the project is to encourage people to adopt a settled sedentary life by setting up new industries which depend mainly on the agricultural products of the area. The distribution of the arable lands will serve as an additional means of attaining this objective. All the lands of the desert are considered the exclusive property of the State, with only the right of usufruct conceded to the people. The people themselves know this only too well, although they may speak about 'their' fields and 'their' grazing-grounds and they are quite willing to settle down and to practise intensive agriculture if they are given the right to possess the land.

The main features of the Wadi-el-Natrun project repeat themselves in the Qattara Depression project which, besides its other objectives, is designed to bring about the sedentarization of the nomads by industrialization as well as by the enlarging of the cultivated area. The project is still under consideration; but from what is already known about it, it seems that the starting-point will be the digging of a long canal connecting the Mediterranean at the village of El-Alamein with the depression which lies 10 kilometres to the south of the coast. This step will be taken with the purpose of transforming a part of the depression into a large lake covering an area of about 14,000 square kilometres. The lowest point in the depression is 134 metres below sea-level; thus, it is expected that the sea water will rush towards the depression at some 600 cubic feet per second. The force of the rushing water could be used as motive power for factories in the area and as a means of generating the electric power necessary for industries to be established. As in the case of the Wadi-el-Natrun project, all the labour needed for these industries will be recruited locally. In addition, the creation of this vast artificial lake will temper the heat of the area and it is expected that as a result of the perpetual evaporation from the lake large amounts of rain will fall there, thus making possible the cultivation of vast stretches of land. It will certainly take a very long time for the lake to be completely filled up with sea-water. Experts estimate, for example, that it will need about 40 years for the water-level to reach 70 metres below sea-level, and about 150 years for it to reach 50 metres below sea-level. Some 1,300 years should pass before the depression itself is entirely filled up with salt deposits as a result of evaporation.

Lastly, the Ras-el-Hikma project endeavours to deal with the same problem but from a different angle. Unlike the Wadi-el-Natrun and the Qattara Depression projects which are concerned with industrialization and increasing the cultivated lands as means of encouraging sedentarization, the Ras-el-Hikma project is designed, to achieve that end by improving the grazing potentialities of the Western Desert in general and the Fuka-Ras-el-Hikma region in particular; and also by rationalizing the use of pasture-grounds. The logic that lies behind the project is as follows: The excessive misuse of the pasture plants and uncontrolled grazing in the desert have caused aridity and consequently obliged the people to adopt a nomadic life in search of

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178 •657 pasture. Therefore, if pasture grasses could be developed and grazing practices could be organized, it would then be easy to bring the herders to a form of sedentary life in which they could practise animal husbandry in certain specific areas all the year round, without any need for transhumance or for seasonal migrations or movements. It is thought that the long-term results of the project will be both an increase in livestock production and a greater interest in the land and in intensive agriculture—a feature which hardly exists among the nomads. Ras-el-Hikma, a small village on the coast mid-way between Alexandria and Sollum, has been chosen as a suitable place for a pilot project. A research station has been established there and the whole project has been placed under the sponsorship of the Desert Institute of Cairo.

An area of about 7500 *feddans* was selected and fenced round for the pilot project. Intensive research has been carried out to develop species of palatable pasture grass which can stand the drought and summer heat and other local conditions. Considerable areas have been resown and kept under close observation. Selected breeds of animals have been imported and placed under observation both for the study of grazing management and in order to determine to what extent these breeds can be used in improving the local breeds. Much attention has been given to the problem of developing the underground water supplies; a number of wells have been sunk and wind-pumps have been erected on some of them. Efforts have also been made to introduce the cultivation of fruits and vegetables and to encourage the local inhabitants to adopt them as part of their normal diet.

So much for the development of the natural resources and grazing management in the area. But if the Bedouins are to settle down and make best use of these improved conditions, they should also be provided with suitable housing for new type of existence. A section of the land put aside for the pilot project was divided into plots on each of which was built a 'model' house designed to meet all the requirements of the Bedouin in his new life. Each dwelling has its own small garden where vegetables and fruit can be grown for private consumption, and its own animal byre. Wells provided with wind-pumps have also been constructed to provide the settlers with water for daily use and for the irrigation of their gardens.

From the purely technical point of view, the pilot project has shown good and encouraging results; and there is every reason to believe that the main project will be equally successful if it is handled with the same determination and seriousness. But it may be too early to give any definite opinion about the sociological results that can be expected. The people have not yet shown any real interest in what is going on around them, in spite of the laborious and continuous efforts made by the staff of the research station to stimulate this interest.

From these examples, two main points may be singled out for special notice:

1. Most of the projects tend to encourage sedentarization at the expense of animal husbandry; or at least they do not give enough consideration to this vital question. The only exception to this is, perhaps the Ras-el-Hikma project. This policy may prove, in the end, to be harmful to livestock production and may have the effect of depleting the animal wealth of the region. Industrialization and the agricultural development of the arable areas in the desert, important as they may be as means of bringing about sedentarization, should not divert interest from long-range development schemes.

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2. It may prove impossible for all the claims put forward for the sedentarization projects to be be fulfilled unless the people are entitled to own the lands they cultivate. Besides giving the inhabitants a new feeling of security, this would attach them permanently to their fields, and thus incite them to give due attention to cultivation. Land-holding is considered to be the determining factor in the process of establishing sedentary life in the desert. 178 657

Reactions to the proposed sedentarization projects vary widely, from indifference, reluctance and resentment to the absolute acceptance of them together with the changes which they may be expected to bring about. The kind of reaction depends mainly on the benefits that may be gained, or the losses that may be suffered, as a result of the realization of these projects. Thus, the semi-nomads who usually spend a considerable part of the year near towns and the larger villages such as Mersa Matrouh and El-Dab'aa and who thus have some idea of the significance and the privileges of settled life react favourably in general and welcome the sedentarization projects. Similar reactions may be found among the groups who have been accustomed to wage labour and who have thus tasted the advantages which money can offer. On the other hand, the more nomadic clans, especially those inhabiting the southern and the western parts of the desert, are forthright in expressing their deep resentment and indignation concerning the new projects. This is more obvious among the nomadic groups which live near the Egyptian-Libyan borders and who thus have grazing interests in Cyrenaica as well. For them sedentarization means the loss of these interests. Tribal chiefs also express dismay at the projects and the impending changes. Their doubts and resentment spring from their fear of losing their authority over the tribesmen, if the clans and the nomadic groups are sedentarizated and thus brought under the control of the local administration. 178

There is no doubt that the realization of these projects will cut deep into the structure of the traditional Bedouin community. The creation of new industrial and trade centres, the drift to agriculture and industry and to paid jobs, the increase in contacts with the Delta and especially with Alexandria, the greater amounts of cash in the hands of the people as a result of all these developments, and lastly the emergence of individual or private ownership of land as a result of new land legislation will lead to a growing sense of individuality and of economic independence among the younger generation. These individualistic tendencies may have some disruptive effects on both the traditional patterns of social relationships and the total social structure. Being economically independent of the lineage or the larger kin-groups, the young men will be able to free themselves from the authority of their elders, which may lead in the end to the breaking down of the whole traditional structure.

Perhaps the system which will be affected more deeply by these new trends is the kinship system, around which revolves all social and political life in the desert. The core of this system is the co-operation of a large number of agnatic kin constituting one corporate economic unit in which the personality of the individual is entirely submerged by group interests. The economic independence of the individual members and the consequent trend towards separation will lead to the shrinkage of this kin-group and to the disappearance of lineages and larger lineage-segments. Thus, the corporate units based on kinship relations will be limited in size and most of them will take the form of the